

To whom it may concern,

My name is A [REDACTED] M [REDACTED] and I am a senior at Hancock Place High School. I met James Jenkins in October of the 2020-2021 school year. I was hoping to apply to an Early College program that my school offers in partnership with St. Louis Community College. I sought his help solely for the application process. I did not think I needed any type of emotional counseling as I have always been fixated on my education. I started meeting with him and we started building my application by looking at my transcripts, asking for recommendation letters, and even writing an essay response. During the meetings we had to work on my application process, James would start to try to get to know me better. After getting to know me a little he asked me if I had issues with anxiety from my honors classes. I did tell him that my honors classes did give me a little anxiety but knew I could control it. Our conversations for the first few weeks were strictly about academics and about my stress, but then one day he decided to dig a little deeper. He asked me if I had ever been abused, and I sat in his office in complete silence. No one had ever asked me that question and I felt frozen like a deer in headlights. I had promised myself to take what happened to me to the grave. I never intended to share my story with anyone, but as I got to talk more and more with Mr. Jenkins, I saw him as someone I could trust. Now reflecting upon this, I regret having such trust in Mr. Jenkins.

As I got to know Mr. Jenkins, I saw him as both my counselor and friend. In late January, I told him about my abuse and he told me that I had to tell my mother. I was reluctant to do so, but I knew that I had to do it. We devised a plan to tell my mother about my abuse and on February 8th, 2021, I told my mom. After telling my mom about my abuse I felt relieved and grateful for Mr. Jenkins. I thought he was someone who cared for me and who cared about my problems. After sharing my story to my mom, I barely ate for a few weeks. I felt disgusted and overwhelmed, but Mr. Jenkins brought me granola, yogurt, and bananas to eat in his office. He painted this image of a savior when in reality, he was a devil in disguise.

Once my case had been dealt with, Mr. Jenkins or James since at that point we were on a first name basis, started a program to help cope with my trauma. He made me talk about my trauma, often going into very specific detail of my abuse. He would make me describe what I was wearing, what was happening to me, my environment, and so much more. I was often left confused because I wondered why he would ask me questions about what I was wearing and what the person was doing to me. He seemed to be calmly intrigued while he asked me question after question. At times he did not seem to have a pitiful look while I described my abuse. I am not saying that he was not satisfied by my descriptions, but I am not denying that he was. All I knew was that I often felt uncomfortable having to relive my abuse in such detail. After having these sessions, I was left feeling confused and I started having frequent breakdowns or flashbacks that completely set off the course of my day. Because no one other than a few friends of mine knew of my situation, James was someone I found myself gravitating towards. He made himself available to me at any time of the day and he made it his mission to learn more about me. He even shared his personal phone number with me so that if I had an emergency, I could contact

him. At that time, I appreciated the gesture, but I did not realize how isolated I would become in the next few months.

As time passed, James tried to convince me that he was the only one who would hear about my problems and the only one who cared for me. He told me how he was my protector and how he aimed to be there for me for as long as he was breathing. He told me that he loved me, that I was special to him, and that he would make sure that I was never to be hurt again. At some point, he drove his car next to me as I walked home. He did this a few times and he did it because he felt he was protecting me. As a 16 year old still processing her trauma, these words and actions were refreshing to see and hear. Because of this, I started to become dependent on the conversations we had, and so did he. He would reach out to me outside of school hours and we would have conversations about anything and everything. I would see him at least once every day whether it was during lunch time, during my free hour, in the hallways, or during a meeting we scheduled. There was not a day that I did not talk to him or see him at least once. I thought that someone finally understood and cared for me, but this was far from the reality of the situation.

I feel that once James shared his personal phone number with me, the dynamic of our counselor and student relationship completely changed. It was as if he had unlocked a new portal where options were limitless. Like I stated earlier, James started reaching out to me outside of school hours to talk about my day, to talk about life, my background, and more. He would ask me questions and he would learn more about me. At some point, however, he started sharing details about his personal life while we talked over the phone and in our meetings at school. He started sharing his marital problems with me and talking about how he was smoking marijuana. He talked about his wife and his family with me. Some topics were reasonable, such as his daughter and how we wanted to be a good role model for her, but others were not as reasonable. For instance, when he was having marital problems, he talked about how his wife was trying to seduce him and he went into detail about this. He would tell me about how his wife was trying to have sex with him and how she purposely walked around their house wearing lingerie. Apart from talking about his wife, he would make inappropriate comments about staff members and others in the school building, including myself. I have issues with my body image and how I look. I shared this confidential information with James and he told me "I wouldn't worry if I were you because it sits in all of the right places." This comment made me feel uncomfortable and it made me feel invalidated, but I shook it out of my head. I figured that it was just him being a male so I thought to leave it as that. He would often make comments about different staff members' appearances or body while simultaneously sexualizing them. He would mention how certain staff members were "sexy" and that "they could get it" if he were not married. Additionally, he talked about how he downloaded the app Tinder and all I could remember was how he was still married while doing all of this.

I did not like when James talked about inappropriate matters like this and it made me feel uncomfortable, so I would quickly try to change the conversation. I would either mention something that occurred throughout my day, or I would ask him a question that would get him

off track. I did this to prevent the inappropriate conversation from escalating as it made me uncomfortable. I never mentioned these encounters I had with Jenkins to anyone because I did not want to hurt the friendship between us.

James talked to me as a friend frequently asking me for advice or asking me about my experiences. There was one instance where he asked me about my upbringing since my parents separated when I was three years old. He wanted to know about the impact it had on me as a child and as an adolescent. He wanted to know because he was having problems with his wife, and he was trying to figure out whether or not it would be a good idea or decision to separate from her. When he asked me this, I wanted to help him out and offer my experience, but it felt invalidating because it was my reality. It was not just a hypothetical situation like he imagined, it was my life we were talking about, and he was just trying to see how his actions could impact his family. When James would share his problems with me or ask me for advice, I would feel as if our roles were reversed. I felt as if I were the counselor and he was the student.

As James and I talked more and more, he did not really talk much more about my trauma or try to counsel me, he was just a "friend" that talked to me. When we talked on the phone we had meaningless conversations, we talked about our day, he learned about me, and this is when I started to learn more about James. This was also a time where I slowly started to see James' true colors. Because James and I talked regularly through text messages or over the phone, his wife started to gain an interest in me. She wanted to know who I was and why James was talking so much to me. James shared who I was to her and she soon wanted to meet me. This made me feel uncomfortable because I wondered why she had the urge to meet me and to know who I was. I remember briefly communicating with her once or twice over the phone, but James then shared my phone number with her. Once she initially communicated with me, she and James invited me to come to their house to have dinner with both of them and their family. Although they invited me, I never went or planned to go to their house as this was a boundary I knew not to cross. There was another time where James and his wife, [REDACTED], invited me to attend their church, but I also never followed through with this plan.

Religion was always a sensitive topic to talk about with James. As a Catholic, I am proud of my faith, but I keep myself open to different religions. This was not the case for James, he would shame me because of my beliefs. He would tell me that if I were not to conform to the religion he was a part of, then I would "go to hell." I do not remember the exact denomination he was a part of, but I do remember him telling me that my religion was full of lies and that I would not get anywhere as a Catholic. He called Catholics hypocrites and said that they were fake believers. He told me that the bible was all I needed and that everything else was a lie. James even went as far as buying me a bible and delivering it to my home. I had never given him my address, but since he followed me home one day after school, he knew where I lived. There was this one time when we had a heated argument about abortion. He believed that abortion was wrong and that it should be illegal. I had a difference of opinion, and I believed that people should have a choice. This upset James and he started to attack my views, and he would not listen to my argument. He would talk about how I wanted people to be murderers and he

over-powered his voice to wash out mine. This greatly upset me because he did not even let me share my perspective of the issue. Religion was such a sensitive topic to touch with James so I tried to avoid it as much as I could.

James knew that reading books is my favorite thing to do. He told me he was an avid reader as well. He started giving me books to read, one of them being "A Case for Christ." He told me that it was the greatest book to be ever written and that it would change my life because of all the truths it held. I read the book, and I did not have anything bad nor good to say about it. To me, it was just another religious book and those are not really the books I gravitate towards. James later suggested that we should start a book club and I agreed. We started to find books that we could both read. I suggested a few that we had in our high school library, but he suggested the book series "You" by Caroline Kepnes. At first, I did not know what this series was about. I now know that this series has an extreme sexual nature embodying themes of domestic violence, manipulation, and murder. When James suggested that I read this book, I had seen that there was a show based on the books, but I only knew that it was a mysterious and thriller type of show. He purchased the first two books of the series and I agreed to read them. I read them and I liked the plot of the story. It was thrilling and it kept me on the edge of my seat. I was so eager to find out the outcome of the book that I read both of these books within a week of one another. At the time, I did not realize nor pay attention to the reality of the book and how it was not age appropriate due to the themes of domestic violence, manipulation, and murder.

These events that I have described above are just snippets of the relationship James and I had. I thought he was someone I could go to and someone who would be there for me. I trusted him with everything in me. I trusted him to know certain things about me. I trusted him enough to tell him what had happened to me before I had ever told my mom. That speaks volumes to the type of person I thought he was. Nonetheless, as I have stated before, my perception of him was not the reality. Behind closed curtains, James was inflicting the same pain that I cried about in his office, to others. He was hearing my story and using me to think that he was helping me when in reality he was hurting so many others in my school. He fooled us into thinking that he cared for students and that he wanted to help us in all aspects of our lives. I was used so that he could justify his actions. He used me to reverse the actions he had inflicted on others. He groomed me and many students at Hancock High School, and we continue to be impacted by his actions.

I knew that James was not going to continue his career as a school counselor at Hancock before anyone else knew. I was the first person to know about this news and I remember him calling me to tell me this. When he told me, I was distraught and confused. He also told me that he was going to take a break from counseling and possibly work in construction. I wondered why he was going to leave and why he was going to have a career change. This was all confusing to me because I believed that he had a good first year at Hancock. He told me that his family issues took a significant toll on him and that he needed to step back. He said that being a counselor was an immense responsibility and that he could not fix his issues if he had the workload of being a

counselor. I was heartbroken to hear this news, and I respected James' decision to leave. What I did not know was the ulterior motive for his departure.

After I heard about the news of him abusing my peers, I completely shut down. I did not know how to process what had happened so I decided to shut it out, but over time it consumed me. I lost what I thought was my support system, and I felt as if I were alone. The first few months after the news came out were difficult. I cried daily because of the pain that I felt for my peers and for the fact that I was used and groomed. I no longer was able to contact the person who I thought was my sole support system. I became distraught and I felt as if I were going through withdrawal. Instead of it being a drug, it was a person I was attached to. I thought I was making so much progress with my trauma, but I had not and still have not made any progress. James fooled me into thinking that he was helping me, yet when I heard about what he did, I felt all of my "progress was undone.

James has had such a negative impact on students at Hancock Place High School. Everytime we hear his name, we freeze like deers in headlights. We can not process anything nor function correctly when we hear of him. Many students at Hancock High School find it hard to trust the adults at our school. It is hard to even step into his office without having images of his face pop up in our minds. We do not seek help and we do not find the help we need because we are afraid of being used again. We no longer feel safe enough to have conversations with counselors and it is hard to talk about our problems and concerns.

As for myself, it took me almost a year and a half to just mention Jenkins' name to others. I could not mention his name because of all of the pain I went through. Just hearing his name made my heart race and I instantly would feel unsafe. For a year and a half, I did not talk to anyone about my trauma or about my relationship with James. I let it consume me for a long time, but then I decided that enough was enough. I decided to talk to a counselor and it took everything in me to do this. I was scared that I would be used again and it was hard for me to trust someone again. I talked once with my counselor and that was the first time I had talked about James and what he did. My counselor listened to me and she let me guide the conversation. That has been one of the only times that I have talked about James. I still struggle to talk about him and his impact. I have recurring feelings of confusion and I question why he did what he did. His job was to help others so I wonder why he decided to hurt others instead. There is not a day that I do not live without the damage or pain he inflicted on my peers and I.

This is the lasting impact of James. He has left many students, including myself, picking up the pieces of ourselves that he broke. We continue to live broken lives as we try to move on from the damage he caused. Everyday that I walk into that school, I am reminded of him. I am reminded of the times I was in his office crying my eyes out while he fakely seemed to care. Because of him, it is difficult for me to open up to others. I have not sought out to find the help I need because of the fear of being used and the fear of others abusing my confidential information. I now bottle everything up and let it consume me until I can no longer handle it. I can no longer listen to my favorite songs by Novo Amor because he loved them as well. Everytime I hear a song from them, I am reminded of him. Because of James, I have not

addressed my previous trauma, and I do not know if I will ever be able to address it. Because of him, I am back to where I started. I am a changed person, but I feel as if I am the same person still stuck in January of 2021. Instead of leaving a positive mark on me, James has forever altered my life in a negative manner. I used to love James as a person, but now my eyes are filled with despise and tears towards him. I am not a person who wishes harm on others, but I want James to feel the same pain he inflicted on me and my peers. I wish I could tell him how much I despise him because I know that would break his heart. I wish for him to see how my peers and I are still standing even amongst the adversity he caused for us so he can see how strong we are. Though we are still picking up broken pieces of ourselves, we are growing day by day. I hope he is marked by his actions, and I hope that they will negatively impact his life. He is not a professional. Instead, he is nothing more than a child predator. My last hope is for James to never see the daylight that he stole from me and my peers.

Sincerely,

A [REDACTED] M [REDACTED]